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# Israel intensifies air and limited ground incursion in buildup to full out invasion

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Israel on Friday expanded attacks by ground and air into Gaza, in what appear to be limited operations in the buildup to a full-scale invasion in response to the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks.

Israel has been massing forces near the border of the territory and conducting relentless airstrikes on targets inside the Gaza Strip. An invasion by ground forces would likely be led by tanks and armored personnel carriers. Hamas militants have likely been preparing for the invasion by laying in stores of ammunition and setting up ambushes in the densely populated urban setting of the Gaza Strip, which is roughly the size of Las Vegas or twice that of Washington D.C.

Israeli military spokesman Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari told reporters that ground forces were “expanding” their activity in the Gaza Strip on Friday night. However, he did not announce the widely anticipated offensive. Nor did he say that Israeli troops had entered Gaza. Israeli tanks have made temporary incursions into Gaza twice in the last two days.

An invasion is expected to be bloody for civilians and combatants.

"It's unclear how extensive Friday's incursion is," according to a U.S. official who was not authorized to speak publicly.

Israel feels compelled to make Hamas pay for the Oct. 7 attacks that killed 1,400 in Israel, said Mark Quantock, a retired Army general and former head of intelligence for U.S. Central Command. Fighting will be intense and difficult, as Hamas has an extensive network of tunnels that must be cleared, he said.

"Israel will be unrelenting in pursuing and destroying Hamas leadership wherever it appears – and that's the long game," Quantock said. "I suspect that Israel will relent to international pressure, and there is a lot of it."



*Contributing: Kim Hjelmgaard*